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CAMP ARCADY

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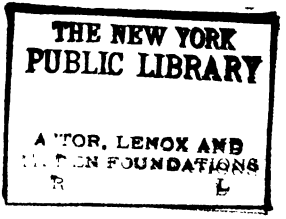
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The Rejected Picture.

CAMP ARCADY

The story of four girls, and some others, who "kept house" in a New York "flat"

FLOY CAMPBELL

Richard G. Badger & Co.
BOSTON MDCCCC

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

The First Evening in Camp 11

CHAPTER II.

The Winter's Work opens 31

CHAPTER III.

Christmas Festivities 59

CHAPTER IV.

New Year's Trials 73

CHAPTER V.

Sid has Adventures 97

CHAPTER VI.

Sid's Baby 115

CHAPTER VII.

The Camp's Last Frolic 137

WQR 19FEB'36

THE ILLUSTRATIONS

By the Author

The Rejected Picture . . .	*Frontispiece*	
The New Arrival . . .	facing page	12
Maud at Work	" "	32
Raphaelina	" "	88
The Baby	" "	116
The Final Talk	" "	156

THE FIRST EVENING IN CAMP

CAMP ARCADY

CHAPTER I.

The First Evening in Camp.

"'MOST time for Raphael to be back with the new girl, Saint."

The speaker was lounging on a couch in a New York studio. The clear north light, falling from above, showed her lazy, graceful figure, and the restless turn of her brown head, and hazel eyes.

Her companion, a sweet, dark-eyed little woman, looked up from her book.

"That's Raphael's step now," she said, rising to open the door.

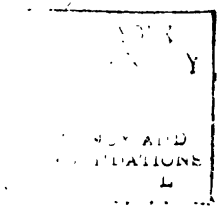
The two women who entered could

scarcely have been in greater contrast. One was tall, dark-skinned, with straight black brows above burning dark eyes, and a strong, almost masculine chin, contradicted by a sensitive mouth. The other was small and girlish, with fair curling hair and a fresh young face, pink with the flush of healthful country life.

"This is Miss Hastings, girls," said the tall woman, formally presenting her companion. "Miss Hastings, this is Miss Welch," with a nod toward the bright-faced girl on the couch.

"Better known," broke in the person indicated, "as Sarah Siddons — Siddy, for short — on account of histrionic aspirations. You don't know the first principles of introduction, Raphael. Let *me* take charge of Miss Hastings. This, Miss Hastings, is Cecilia Howard, known

The New Arrival.



as Saint Cecilia. You will hear specimens of her music later, and realize the appropriateness of her name. This tall and solemn creature who brought you from the station is Elizabeth Danton; community name, Raphaelina. Her masterpieces adorn the walls about you," with a dramatic wave of the hand. "You, with the three just introduced, form the community, the Big Four, who encamp together for the winter. What shall we call you in the Council Tent of Camp Arcady?"

The poor little maiden looked with bewildered eyes from the group of girls to the strange surroundings of the studio.

"I — I — my name is Maud," she stammered.

"Maudie it is, then, until we find one that fits you better. Saint, take Maudie

to your room, and fix her for tea. Raphy, your locks are in wild and inartistic disorder. I'll have tea on in half a jiffy: it's been waiting for you two. Now run on, children, and get tidy." And Miss Welch, Sarah Siddons, Siddy, for short, whisked briskly out of the room.

Cecilia held out a kind little hand to Maud, who stood helplessly where Sid had left her, looking half frightened and wholly bewildered.

"I hope we shall be the best of friends," she said gently, "and shall make you feel that you have a home and a family in this human wilderness. We'll try to make your winter pleasant. Do you think we can?" And she smiled her friendliest smile.

"Now," she added, "I must 'fix you for tea,' according to Sid's orders. Let

me take your hat and cape, and brush your hair back a little — so. Yes, Sid, we're coming."

Sid was standing at the door, ringing a big bell, and calling vigorously,—

"Tea! tea! tea! la-a-st call for tea in the dining ca-a-a-r!"

Elizabeth was already at the table, giving it the finishing touches. Very inviting it looked, with the queer bits of china gathered from odd corners for their artistic value in "still lifes," the teaset of old britannia ware (that had been "my great-grandmother's wedding present," Sid proudly explained), the bread-and-butter as artistically thin as the plate that held it, and the chops of a golden brown that couldn't have been improved.

Cecilia poured the fragrant tea,— Elizabeth watching silently,— while Sid

did "the general waiting," seeing that Maud's plate was well supplied with bread and meat, and her mind with information.

"I'm glad you're to be with us, Maudie," she began, as she distributed chops. "Raphy will help you lots with your art studies, and the Saint will be real motherly and sweet, and I — oh, I'll see that things don't get much slower in New York than they are in Kansas. I usually manage to make them pretty lively," she added with a laugh.

"How true that is, my dear Sid!" sighed Cecilia, with mock resignation; while silent Elizabeth's eyes looked, it seemed to Maud, through and through the new art student.

"And I know you'll like our housekeeping," went on Sid. "It is such fun!

You see this house was once the abode of Wealth and Fashion (with large capital letters), and these mansard rooms were the servants' quarters; and horrid stuffy things they were, too,— the rooms, not the servants, I mean. But Wealth and Fashion moved up town long ago, and shops took possession of the basement and the first floor, doctors and lawyers have the second and third floors, and we have the mansard. They took out the north slope of the roof, and put in a sky-light; and there are two fine studios for Raphy and the Saint. And just think, the whole floor — four rooms and a hall — doesn't cost us any more than a single up-town studio! And it's the nicest place to keep house! This is kitchen-and-dining-room, you see. Here's the cook-stove behind the Japanese screen.

Isn't it a dear? And that dry-goods box is a kitchen table and cupboard combined; and this fire-escape balcony is our ice-box, where we keep our milk and butter, and — oh, I'm just wild to have you get through supper and show you the funny cooking things, — the dishpan and the spider and "—

"Sid, Sid," interrupted Cecilia, "do let poor Maud rest. You must have forgotten that she just came from the train. I'm going to take her right away and help her unpack, and then make her lie down and rest. Come, dear."

"But she must sign the constitution and by-laws first," said Sid. "There it is, tacked above the household purse, Maud."

Maud went to look at the document indicated. It read as follows: —

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

OF THE

COMMUNITY OF CAMP ARCADY.

ARTICLE I.— This community shall consist of four persons.

ARTICLE II.— The officers shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. There shall be four incumbents to each office, all having equal voice in matters of interest.

ARTICLE III.— The purse below shall be the Camp Treasury, and into it every member shall put, during each month, the sum of seventeen dollars ($17), said sum to be used: (1st) to pay rent for the camp dwelling; (2d) to pay the marketing bills; (3d) for "wash ladies" and "scrub" ditto.

If there is a deficit, each member shall be taxed one dollar to make up the same. If there is a surplus, it shall be used to treat the

crowd to a concert, opera, ice-cream, or other worthy object.

To which we, the undersigned, do hereby agree.

Signed and subscribed,

SARAH SIDDONS.
SAINT(?) CECILIA.
RAPHAELINA.

"There's a space left for you, Maud; and here's a pencil," said Sid.

Maud wrote her name at the end of the column, laughing. "Just think of a society of four persons having sixteen officers!"

"You see," Cecil explained gravely, "a society must have officers and we didn't want any jealousy over these things, so we fixed it that way."

"And it works beautifully," added Sid. "Here," rapping on the table with a

knife, "I call the meeting to order, and move that, as this is our first tea together, we all tell our plans for the winter, and next spring, before we break up, compare the results with our hopes. Come now, I'll break the ice for you bashful ones. I'm going to get a position as understudy of some Shakspearian actress; and by next spring I'm going to star it myself and have all New York at the feet of the rising genius of the day, Miss Marguerite Welch (known more commonly to her friends as Sid). Now, Saint:" and Sid subsided with a gay laugh and a funny little dramatic pose.

The other three joined in the merriment, for Sid's aspirations were the camp joke.

"I?" said Cecilia. "I might ask Sid for a place in the orchestra of her theatre,

but my dreams are much more modest. I only want a good class,— say about twenty pupils,— and a reputation as the best music-teacher in town. That's all!"

"Not bad," said Sid, critically, "not bad at all. Now, Raph?"

Elizabeth's eyes were smiling, but she spoke soberly.

"I have only one aim," she said, — "to paint honestly, to respect my work, to let nothing pass from my studio that I can possibly improve, and to leave the result — in stronger hands."

The last words were spoken in a lower, reverent tone, that made Cecilia give Elizabeth's hand a sympathetic squeeze under the table; while Sid said complainingly: —

"Dear me, Raphael, you make me feel like a church. 'Tisn't agreeable.

Break the spell, Maud. I hope your aims are a trifle more ambitious than our poor, low ones."

"I haven't any special aim," said Maud, "except that I want to work hard, and try to do so well that the folks will be proud of me. I don't want to disappoint them," she added, her thoughts going back to the dear people in the little house out West — so far away now.

"That's a very lovely aim," said Cecilia, "and I know you will not disappoint them. Your mother will be proud of your brave efforts, whether you ever become famous or not. Mothers always are."

The girls were silent a moment. Sid was thinking of the mother she had never known, wondering whether she would have loved that real mother more than

her step-mother, "who is so kind I just long to love her, but I can't," she told Cecil. "She is kind because she doesn't love me, and that hurts her conscience."

Cecilia was thinking very tenderly of the gentle, placid woman in the cottage on the Hudson, the sweet saint who had said, "Go to thy work, daughter, if thee feels called; but do not forget that only a true, pure heart and a helpful hand are real success. And when thee is tired of the struggle, my child, remember that here is home."

And Elizabeth thought how, when she started for Paris, her mother kissed her at the cry of "All ashore!" and said: "Work, Elizabeth. Work hard, and think of your work as something holy, not to be insulted by half-hearted effort. You have the power that means responsi-

bility, and I trust you. O my child, my child!"

The Dantons were not an effusive family. They were proud and constrained. That kiss was almost the first Elizabeth could remember receiving from her mother, and it was the last; for a letter from home that waited for her in Paris told her of her mother's death.

"But you must stay and study," her father wrote. "She wished it to be so, and her wishes shall be sacred to us both."

So Elizabeth had stayed four years. Then came news of her father's death. "Overwork and heart-failure," said the letter that recalled her to New York.

"Come, let's do the unpacking and cleaning up," said Sid, at last, jumping to her feet with an impatient shake of her

shoulders as if to rid herself of unpleasant thoughts. "Saint, go and help Maudie with her trunk, will you? Raph, I popped some corn in your chafing-dish this afternoon, and you'd better clean it. I'll 'tend to the dishes. Go on, all of you. Shoo! sho-o-o!" And she drove them out of the room, with much flapping of her apron.

Busy over that most fascinating of all tasks, unpacking, Maud and Cecil soon became quite confidential; and Maud told the motherly little woman that she was dreadfully afraid of Elizabeth. "She is so tall and solemn and dark, and her eyes look like caverns with fires 'way back in the shadows; but Sid is the funniest girl I ever saw," she said.

And Cecil, who was wise, told Maud of Elizabeth's loneliness, of the self-re-

pression and self-concentration that had been her earliest lessons, of her passion for her work, of the pride and shyness that often made her seem cold; told her of Siddy's motherless childhood and untrained girlhood, of the quickness of speech, followed always by an equally quick repentance, of the splendid generosity and loyalty to the right that made all shortcomings as nothing.

So, when Sid rapped at the door and asked if they "weren't to have their evening warble," Maud felt that she must have known the girls for years; and there was a very happy homelike feeling in her heart as she stood listening to Elizabeth's deep alto booming along through the clear soprano of Cecil's tones, and Sid's attempts at tenor.

And, when the singing was done, Ra-

phael looked at the drawings Maud had unpacked, and told her her "eye for color was good, but she would have to do some hard studying on line." And Maud, bewildered, but undaunted, replied, "That's just what I came here for," thereby winning a grave approving smile from Elizabeth, and a hearty, "That's right, child!" from Sid, accompanied by a clap on the shoulder that nearly took her breath away.

THE WINTER'S WORK OPENS

CHAPTER II.

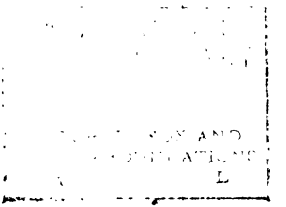
The Winter's Work Opens.

IT took a few weeks for Maud to become accustomed to her new surroundings. She had started to the Art School, and was somewhat humbled to find that her study at home, under the teacher who came twice a week to her little town, counted for nothing here; and she was put on the simplest casts,—block hands and feet. But Elizabeth said: "What does it matter? It doesn't affect your ability. It only shows you where you stand. And there will be more honor in working up from a low class than in staying in a higher one all year,"—a view of the case so cheering that

Maud grew quite proud of the progress she expected to make, and saw herself reaching the life class before Christmas, when the instructors observed her wonderfully rapid progress.

The classes Cecilia and Elizabeth had expected did not appear. The two studios remained occupied day after day only by their owners,— a state of things which rather troubled Maud, until she found that Elizabeth had a regular income from her little property. "Not enough to waste in riotous living," Sid explained, "but enough to struggle along on in 'dacent comfort'; and Cecil has about a hundred in bank, so she is all right for the present. As for me, daddy sends me checks at irregular intervals. They foot up anywhere from twenty to seventy dollars. And, when it is twenty, I

Maud at Work.



borrow from Cecil, when I'm seventy, to pay my debts, and treat the crowd for interest. So don't fret your sympathetic little soul about us, pricss."

Sid and Maud had become great friends, and many were the confidences that passed between the two girls after the lights were out for the night and the other rooms silent.

Maud had discovered behind the gay, bright, light-laughing girl a tender, sympathetic heart, saddened by a childhood in truth fatherless as well as motherless; for Sid's father was a man too absorbed in business to think often about his little daughter.

"I don't know my folks very well," Sid said frankly. "Father sent me to boarding-school when I was a little bit of a thing, and there I stayed until I was

eighteen. Then I went home awhile, but step-mamma and I weren't congenial. I hate teas and receptions. And I don't think it broke my folks' hearts when I wanted to come and live with Elizabeth and Cecil, and study. They didn't inquire very carefully what it was I wanted to study, and I fancy their hair would stand on end if they knew my dramatic aspirations."

Maud, whose own girlhood had been so simple and healthful and sunny, found this account heart-breaking in its pathos. She caught the undertone of hunger for affection, the sadness of a life starved of all knowledge of home and home love; and her heart went out to the wayward, impulsive, lovable girl. Sid returned the friendship with an intensity that was half tragic, half comic, and restrained

many a hasty speech that the younger girl might not be shocked or troubled.

"Here's a whole stack of letters," cried Sid, toiling up the stairs from the hall mail-box one morning. "Come to breakfast, girls, and open them. Here's Maud's regular home letter, and daddy's semi-occasional note for me. A business one for Raphael; and, Cis, you have four. Who are your numerous correspondents, Saint?"

"I suppose I must own up," said Cecilia, glancing through one note after another, and tossing them away as she spoke. "My bank account had dwindled to such tiny proportions that something had to be done. Putting cards in the piano and music stores didn't do any good. So I just put an advertisement in three of

the daily papers: 'Lessons given on piano and harp by me.' These seem to be the results. This one is a piano circular: 'The B. C. D. piano. Best tone,' etc. This one wants to exchange harp lessons for French. The third asks my price for violin, which I can't teach. The fourth is from a gentleman who asks for references as to my ability, and a personal interview."

"What's his name?" demanded Sid.

"A very romantic one, — Douglas Cameron. I'll write to him at once. Maybe he'll be the beginning of my class, girls. Think of teaching a man named Douglas Cameron to twang a harp! Isn't it a Scotch combination? What's your letter, Beth?"

Elizabeth had been thoughtfully folding and unfolding her note; and, as she

looked up, Cecil saw that her face was pale and somewhat troubled.

"Is it bad news?" she asked anxiously.

"My office building burned down yesterday," answered Elizabeth. "I depended on it for my income; and now I won't get a cent until it's rebuilt,—six months, at least."

"But you have your picture for the Academy," said Maud. "Some one will buy that, it's so splendid."

"Don't be too, sure, Maud. One is never sure even of being accepted until one is hung."

At this somewhat grewsome statement the four faces became very grave and troubled.

"Ladies," said Sid, emptying her purse on the table with a dramatic flourish, and

spreading out its contents,— two keys, a stub of a pencil, two dimes, and half a dozen pennies,—"when burdened with financial anxieties, just consider my pocket-book your bank and dismiss all trouble. Make free with this, my wealth. 'Tis all I have to give. Take it, take it freely, and thank me not!"

This munificent offer brought the laugh Sid wanted to hear, and the committee broke up with merriment instead of sadness and apprehension.

Cecil went to write to Mr. Douglas Cameron, Raphael to look over her portfolios and select a few studies that might sell to art dealers, and Sid to carefully consider ways and means, and finally write to her father for "a great big check in his next letter, as Christmas was not far off and presents to be bought."

Only Maud, trudging gayly off to school, felt no anxiety. Elizabeth's picture would surely be accepted; and, once hung, it couldn't help selling, and then orders would simply roll in and pile up, she was sure. Elizabeth was her divinity and her model; and she had not the slightest idea what a terrible struggle life is to a penniless, unknown artist in great New York.

Worry never sat long on Sid's shoulders, especially when she had a plan to remove its cause. So by evening she was her own gay self again.

"Cecil had a visitor to-day," she began mischievously. "He was a most romantic-looking individual, with a yellow mustache and eyes that were deeply, darkly, beautifully blue. Was he the prospective pupil, Cis? Was he Douglas Cameron, the renowned?"

Cecil nodded. "But he isn't the pupil himself," she added.

"More's the pity," put in Sid. "I'd feel as if a stage hero were about if he stalked solemnly into the building every few days."

"But he won't," answered Cecilia. "It's his nephew. In fact, your musical 'progeny,' my friends, is about to become his nursery governess."

"Nursery governess! Cis Howard!"

"Nonsense, Cis! The idea!"

"What do you mean, Saint?"

"It's this way," said Cecilia, flushing at the exclamations of disapproval. "His nephew is a little lame fellow, not strong enough to go to school or even to have regular lessons at home. He is passionately fond of music; and I am wanted to spend the mornings with him and give

him such lessons as will not tax his strength, or read and talk with him,—just something to keep him employed and interested, without tiring him out."

There was a chorus of wrathful voices as Cecilia paused.

"To play sick-nurse to a child! How can you, Cis?"

"And how about your work? It will have to suffer."

"And are you going to give up your class?"

"The class don't seem to present a very great obstacle at present," said Cecilia, with a funny twist of her mouth. "As for playing sick-nurse, I like that, you know. I am never so happy as when I have some one to depend on me and be petted. And I have the whole afternoon to myself, with a sure income of $25,

which, I think, is generous for the work. And, if I dislike it, or find it takes too much time, when I get my class, I can give it up. So I'm very happy over it. Now don't make me dissatisfied!" appealingly.

"It's better than nothing, I suppose," conceded Sid, grudgingly; "and, when Raph's picture is hung, the family pride will be restored. We'll kindly allow you to stick to your bargain, Cis, if you'll be real good."

Unfortunately for Sid's concession, the family pride suffered a new and ruder shock the next week in the rejection of that all-important picture.

"The idea!" cried Sid, tenderly dusting the frame of the pearl which had been scorned when cast before the committee. "The idea, when you've had a picture in

the Salon, of their declining your work at a miserable little provincial paint-show in New York!"

"Those adjectives don't apply, as you know," said Raphael, stoically.

"But it was so strong and original," sighed Cecilia. "There will be dozens of things on the walls that won't compare with it in any way."

"You overrate both me and the painting," said Elizabeth, patiently. Then to Maud, who was fairly sobbing in her disappointment: "Never mind, child. As I told you at the first of the year, it doesn't harm one to know where she really stands. I can take my own medicine."

"Your own nothing!" snapped Sid. "Don't you dare insinuate that painting isn't splendid! Those judges are a set

of utter, unmitigated idiots!" And she flounced out of the room, muttering wrathfully.

Elizabeth laughed, and after a moment the two others joined her.

"She wouldn't be half so angry at a slight to herself, dear, generous-hearted thing!" said Cecilia.

"You'd better go and smooth her ruffled feelings, Cis," said Elizabeth. "Maud, too. Maud can still the tempest of Sid's wrath quicker than any of us."

She stood smiling until the studio door closed after the two, then threw herself into a chair, and buried her face in her hands, shivering as if with cold.

"Oh," she whispered under her breath, "it would have killed me if they had stayed a moment longer!"

She sat tense and quiet for a moment, then drew away her hands and stared painfully at the painting she had worked on so lovingly.

It was a simple little scene: a woman standing at the window of a farm-house, at work, her head dark against the sunlit field beyond; in a spot of sunlight on the floor a baby played.

"That head is not good," said Elizabeth, still in the same strained whisper. "I could have painted it better. No, no,"—suddenly stretching out her hands to her work,—"I could not. I gave you my very best, and you are better than scores that were accepted. Oh, I must not cry! The girls must not know how this has hurt me."

She clenched her hands, and, forcing back the tears, she rose, and paced up and

down the room in the gathering dusk, fighting her disappointment bravely, longing bitterly for help and sympathy, but too proud to show her hurt even to the kindly eyes of her friends, and trying to plan for the coming month as a means of escape from the feeling of humiliation and despair.

"I have only sold one sketch, so far, to the art dealers," she pondered. "I must try the art magazines. Then there is illustrating; but they say comics sell best, and I never could do comic things. And, if it comes to the worst, there is advertisement work and poster drawing. I can surely get them as a last resort. I will do anything,—anything until I gain a foothold, and then"— Her mouth straightened firmly, and her eyes shone with renewed hope and energy.

Each morning thereafter, when Maud started to her school and Cecil to her little pupil, Raphael would leave with a bundle of sketches under her arm. She carried paintings to every art magazine she could find; but all were "overstocked with oils" or "water-colors" or "designs," as the case might be. In the last room she visited the attendant told her loftily, as she handed back the paintings with the usual: "We are overstocked. It isn't that the work is bad, you know; and, of course, we should be glad to have you try again, you know. But, you know, some things might be good and never take with the public with an unknown name signed to 'em."

"But how is the name to be known unless some one will publish it?" meditated puzzled Raphael. "Maybe editors

would be less particular about their illustrating. I'll try, at any rate." So she hunted out some pen and ink drawings, and translated a little French nursery rhyme, to which she fitted other pictures; and these she carried to the editorial rooms of a great children's magazine.

The elevator boy directed her to the counter in a great office. Thence she was sent to "the fifth door on the right-hand side of the hall." As she passed the other doors and saw the groups of busy workers, reading, writing, silent and absorbed, her estimation of the magazine rose and her courage sank. She was tempted to turn and flee from her task, but she stepped grimly on. At her request for the art editor she was shown to Mr. Gratewell's room.

Mr. Gratewell looked up absent-mindedly from his desk.

"Eh? What?" he said. "Oh! pray have a chair, madame. Can I be of service to you?"

Elizabeth flushed painfully. This lion she was facing seemed to be roaring as gently as any sucking dove, but she was still frightened and nervous. She sat down on the edge of the chair.

"I have some drawings to show you," she said sternly, her fingers fumbling with the cord around her little roll.

"You've tied it hard, haven't you?" said Mr. Gratewell, pleasantly. "Never mind," taking it from her. "I'll cut the string: we have plenty more in the office."

"To do them up again?" asked Elizabeth, with grim humor. "That isn't an encouraging comment,—before you've

examined them, too." The editor, who was already absorbed in the drawings, looked up, bewildered, then laughed out heartily.

"It did sound a little discouraging," he said; "but maybe we can get along without the string, after all. I hope so, I'm sure." He frowned at the drawings again.

"Now these — I like this song. You have made a very pretty translation, and the drawing is delightful. But we have a stock of cradle songs that would keep the magazine going two years. So I can't take that. And the pen-and-inks,— You are a beginner at this kind of thing? Yes, I thought so. You draw very well, indeed; but your stuff wouldn't reproduce. It ought to be at least four times as large as you have it, and bolder. More — well,

if you don't mind the impertinence, I'll just give you a little lesson in the practical use of pen-and-ink."

Mind the impertinence? Elizabeth was overwhelmed with the honor. She drew up her chair, beginning to feel more at ease.

"You see," continued Mr. Gratewell, "we reduce these things to about one-fourth of their original size. So you want to make the whole thing larger, as I said; and your lines must be strong and simple, like this" — drawing a face with a few clever pen-strokes. "But I'll show you some of our regular work. You will see from that what I mean."

So he conducted Elizabeth through several crowded offices to a door marked "No Admission." This he opened, and waited for her to enter.

"These are our original drawings," he said.

He pulled out case after case of work, showed her where this was good and that bad, and finally, after an hour's helpful talk, dismissed her with: —

"We may find one of your drawings useful enough to work over. I'll keep them a few days, and see. And you mustn't be discouraged if they all come back to you, but try again. Try some initial letters: they are pretty salable. And — oh, yes! Try that cradle song somewhere else. It is very good. I wish you all possible success."

Poor Elizabeth had had many rebuffs in her search for work, and had borne them stoically; but this kindness and encouragement where she had expected at best only hurried courtesy nearly made

her break down. She had to bow herself hastily and silently away, for fear the tears would come if she spoke or lingered.

She left the song at another magazine office, in charge of a liveried boy. Then, tired, but happy, she went home.

"How kind he was," she thought, as she obediently began to design initial letters, "to give his time and thought that way to an utter stranger! I wish he knew how I appreciate his kindness. I used to think editors were always bears, but I never will again."

"Raph! O Raphael!" called Sid from the hall.

"What is it, Sid?"

"Letter from father!" said Sid, waving it wildly as she appeared. "Listen!" and she read from the paper in her hand:

Dear Daughter,— Enclosed find twenty-five dollars. I want you to get me a picture for your mother's Christmas. You know more about such things than I. Select one within the limits of the enclosed check, and send the same to me at office.

"Now have you any little thing you could afford to sell for that insignificant sum?"

"I don't sell you things," said Elizabeth. "You may choose anything you want in that portfolio."

"Never asked you to sell me anything," said Sid. "It's daddy; and you've got to take the check, or I won't buy of you at all."

"Very well, have it your own way," responded Elizabeth, in a slightly offended tone. So Sid buried herself in sketches, and finally, with a shriek of delight,

seized upon a landscape, giving Raph the check and an enthusiastic hug.

"It's ten thousand times too good for twenty-five dollars, though," she declared, as she danced out of the room; "and I know father will be tickled to death with it." Raphael contemplated the check with a sigh. "I wish it hadn't come through Sid," was her first proud scruple. Then, "Dear girl! she did enjoy giving it, though; and it couldn't have come in better, for I was at my last dollar."

Her resignation would have been sadly upset if she had heard Sid chuckle wickedly as she burned the letter, which really read: —

Dear Daughter,— I enclose the first instalment of your Christmas money. Do as you please with it. Don't stint yourself. Will send more by next mail.

"Now I fancy," she soliloquized, "that was a mighty clever piece of acting. Dear, I'm glad she didn't ask to see the letter! She would sooner have cut her head off than take the money if she had known! I suppose Maud would call that a lie. Well, it was; but I'm not a bit properly ashamed of it," with a sudden decided nod of her bright head.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

CHAPTER III.

Christmas Festivities.

"WHAT shall we do for Christmas, girls?" said Sid one night, yawning dismally. "We haven't had a lark for ages and centuries, and we must make some kind of break away from this deadly stagnation"—

"Slangy creature!" put in Maud, with an affectionate pull at the brown curl bobbing over Sid's forehead.

"Or we'll die of loneliness," finished Sid, making an ineffectual attempt to pull Maud's nose in retaliation.

"Are you going home, Cis? or you, Infant?"

"I don't like that name," protested

Maud, "and I won't have it. Of course, I can't go home. It's too far."

Cecilia looked up, flushing. "I've had a plan simmering in my head for some time, girls," she said.

"Good! Let it boil over at once," cried Sid, promptly.

"But, if any of you don't like it, you mustn't hesitate to say so. I won't care at all."

"We'll put it to vote," said Sid. "Attention, all! Saint Cecilia has the floor — and a plan!"

"I didn't want to leave you three, you see," began Cecilia; "and I couldn't get along without mother for Christmas. So I thought we might have her down, and have a real Christmas dinner, all by ourselves."

"Oh, how jolly!" cried Maud.

"Isn't it fine?" echoed Sid. "A real Christmas dinner, girls, with turkey and plum pudding, and" —

"But my plan isn't finished," said Cecilia. "I want to have little John Cameron here, too. He's all alone in that big house, with only Mr. Cameron and the servants; and his lameness makes him so shy that he doesn't get acquainted with other children, and he has no mother. And, oh! he will have such a dreary Christmas."

"He won't if we can help it!" cried Sid. "Of course, he shall come if his uncle will let him, shan't he, girls?"

The two heads nodded decidedly.

"Thank you, dears," said Cecilia, beaming. "He's such a quiet little mouse, I know he won't be a bother; and I do so want to give him a glimpse of

brightness. If you could just see him, as I do, so lonely in that big house, with his pain and his shyness. We're poor, all of us; but we're infinitely rich compared with that little pupil of mine, who is the heir of such piles of money."

There were tears in Sid's eyes, for she was always deeply touched by the loneliness of childhood.

"I move we give the Saint a vote of thanks for her splendid plan," cried Maud. "All in favor of a mission to the rich?"

"I!" and "I!"

"You're the dearest things that ever lived," said Cecilia, fervently.

So it happened that Mrs. Howard came down the day before Christmas,—a little, round, gentle woman, with soft brown eyes like Cecil's, who shed an atmosphere

of love and home about her, as she called all the girls "my daughters," and kissed them as tenderly as if they were indeed her own.

Maud, whose homesickness had waxed strong as the holiday season approached, began to feel that Christmas away from home might be less cruelly hard than she had expected; and Sid simply bowed down and worshipped at "mother's" shrine.

The girls had determined to hang up their stockings in the good old-fashioned way, the only rule being that no gift should entail an outlay of more than ten cents. There was great fun on Christmas Eve, when the five long stockings decorated the three door-knobs. There was much peeping from the cracks of half-opened doors, dodging of ghostly figures behind screens and into the kitchen to

escape encounters with other ghosts, and stifled laughter as queer packages were crowded into the shapeless stockings on the door-knobs, adding their distortion to that of other queer packages below them.

Then, in the morning, the indescribable charm of emptying the stiffly crammed stockings.

There was a gingerbread man and a long red and white candy cane apiece from Mrs. Howard. Some "Heavenly Twins" made of black yarn, with stitches of red silk for eyes, nose, and mouth, were fastened to the ends of a long piece of red ribbon, bearing a card with this legend: —

"See how funny we do look,
As we're hanging from a book."

Two witches made of bits of wired chenille, with tissue paper cloaks and hats and tooth-pick brooms, were Sid's portion. A long, thin figure, that nodded its head like a gloomy mandarin, and showed its empty pockets, came to Elizabeth. Some peanuts painted as owls, and perched on toothpicks for branches, were Maud's contribution. And Elizabeth had added a note of beauty in the dainty water-color drawings she had given each of the others.

It took a long time to get breakfast that morning; and there was so much laughter over the absurd presents, and so much running to see them as they lay spread out on the model-stand, that the dishes were not out of the way when John Cameron came.

The big eyes and crooked, pitiful little

body won their way straight to the hearts of all the girls. And, as for John, his delight in the queer rooms and their bright occupants was unbounded.

"It's so much better than the way I live!" he said with a long breath. "Oh, I wish I stayed here always!"

He had his own gingerbread man, a cane, and a funny Brownie made from a cuff with a ball inside of it, so that, when you put it at the top of a slanting board, the ball, rolling down, made it turn somersaults to the bottom, where it sat, grave and unsmiling. And nothing he had received in all his collection of toys at home — not even the splendid jack-knife with four blades and a corkscrew — was half so charming to him as that Brownie. His illness and loneliness had kept him rather childish, so he did not

realize that it was rather beneath his manly dignity to enjoy so youthful a toy.

The processes of getting dinner, too, were new and absorbing to him. The turkey — noble bird that he was — had proven too big for the baby stove. So permission had been gained to roast him in the janitor's oven, which was in the back basement. But there were potatoes to be prepared, and peas and celery and lettuce; and there were mayonnaise dressing and pudding sauce to be made. And John hopped excitedly from the stove, with its boiling kettles, to the table where Maud was beating up oil and lemon juice.

And then, when all was ready for it, the turkey had to be escorted out of the front basement door and up the four

flights of stairs. There was a regular procession in his honor. First came Sid, to open the doors; then Mrs. Howard, with the turkey in the pan, carefully covered with another pan to keep the bird hot. Then came Maud, with a towel and plate, useless, but anxious, bringing up the rear. Some people on the opposite side of the street stared, amazed, at the sight; and one or two startled heads popped from doors as the procession passed through the lower halls. But, bless you! that only made things more interesting.

And that turkey,—there never was such another bird! So juicy and rich and tender! And Sid carved it with the air of a perfect gentleman, which added to its flavor. And the cranberry jelly was done to perfection, and the mashed potatoes light as a puff, and the

plum pudding, which Mrs. Howard had brought down with her from the country, blazed merrily around its sprig of holly; and the girls drank each other's health and John's in coffee, and were as gay and excited as if it had been champagne. And homesickness fled from the house, affrighted.

And then they ate nuts and raisins, with an occasional nibble at the candy canes, while they told stories, funny or pathetic, until the dusk fell. And then came the singing, and John must play a little Christmas carol, and pipe it out in his pathetic little voice.

And, when the big carriage with its be-furred coachman came for him at last, he shook hands with them all round, and told them his Christmas had been "just great! the jolliest day!" And he clung

fast to Cecil at last, and whispered: "Oh, I do love you so! You are so good to me!"

And she kissed him slyly behind the door, with a happy little break in her voice as she said good-night.

And all the girls declared that there never was a more delightful Christmas than the one they had passed in those four little bohemian rooms, with the cheap presents and the simple dinner.

NEW YEAR'S TRIALS

CHAPTER IV.

New Year's Trials.

THERE seemed a big blank in life when the holiday season had passed. The rooms, bereft of "mother," as the girls all called Mrs. Howard, seemed very empty indeed. The girls felt like chickens without any warm wings to hide under, now that she was gone home.

Elizabeth's purse was almost empty again. Her cradle song had been returned to her, as had the pen-and-ink drawings, with the kindly message: "Try again. You will, with practice, make a good illustrator." This filled her soul with gratitude, but had no effect on her empty pocket. She had written

to her lawyer to sell her interest in that unfortunate, half-rebuilt office building,— she had an almost insane horror of borrowing,— and meanwhile she tasted the misery of being practically penniless. She had not even enough for the monthly contribution to the camp treasury. So she put in ten dollars, and told the girls that she would be busy with illustrating and would not be in to dinner. Elizabeth was terribly proud, with the pride that cannot share its anxieties and trials, though it is ready indeed to share its joys. Cecil and Maud, busy with their own work, did not question her statement at all; but Sid, whose dramatic efforts had not progressed beyond putting her name in possession of a dramatic agency as one in search of a position, half guessed how matters stood.

She waylaid Elizabeth one day, and said, with comic distress: "Raphael, daddy sent me a whole eighty this month; and I haven't a place to put it, and the bank has a lofty scorn of such microscopic sums. Won't you take care of some of it until I need it? I'd be ever so much obliged."

But Elizabeth shook her head. "Shan't touch it," she said. "I'm not a good safe deposit." And nothing would move her, to Sid's wrath and disgust.

"She hasn't any right to be so hateful and selfish and proud," she soliloquized resentfully. "I'd like to know what the Lord put us here for, if not to let our friends help us. 'Tisn't fair."

But Elizabeth remained firm. One of her initial letters she sold to Mr. Gratewell for two dollars. She took

the cradle song, after at least a dollar had been spent on it in postage, to a queer, little, downy-mustached youth of twenty, who was the sole editor of a queer little magazine.

"Do they say 'By-lo' to babies when they want 'em to go to sleep?" he asked, puzzled by the refrain. "I haven't any of my own; and, you see, I hardly know how they do sing to 'em."

Elizabeth's lips twitched as she glanced at the boyish face, but she assured him that "By-lo" was very soothing to infantile nerves.

So the youth said: "Well, I like the song. I guess you can leave it. I'll publish it in — let me see — April or May. Will ten dollars be all right? We pay on publication."

Elizabeth left, feeling heartsick. She

had only one dollar left, and April was two months away. Illustrating evidently would not do. She would try newspaper work. So she tramped from one newspaper office to another all the afternoon, and received only a short "Staff's full! No vacancy!" At last, in despair, she stopped at the advertising window, and wrote,—

WANTED.— Work at any kind of drawing or drafting, advertisement or poster designing. Address E. D., care of the *Morning News*.

She paid thirty-five cents of her last dollar for the publication of this among the "professional" notices.

It was dark when she reached home. Cecil was alone, playing softly.

"Maud and Sid went to the opera to-night," she explained, coming to

throw her arm around Elizabeth, who dropped wearily into a chair and leaned her head on her hand. "I wasn't rich enough to go 'long, so I waited at home for you. You are awfully late. Are you all tired out, dear heart?"

Elizabeth moved impatiently beneath the loving hand; and Cecil, realizing the weariness, but not divining the hopeless misery under it, moved away, adding: "We had oyster soup for supper to-night, and it was so good I saved you some. I thought it would brace you up when you came in, even if you weren't hungry. Something hot rests one, when she is tired."

Elizabeth suddenly realized that she had not had a bite to eat since breakfast, and that she was, indeed, ravenously hungry as well as tired. She silently

swallowed the steaming soup and the orange that Cecil brought, wondering if the kindly attention was due to the girl's having guessed her humiliating state of beggary.

Cecil set her fears at rest by saying: "I'm so glad you have a position, Raphy. I know you're happier so, even if it is a hard one and keeps you out late. One gets to be thankful for an income of even a few dollars, doesn't she?"

Then she went back to her piano and her dreams, wherein a sunny mop of yellow hair and a pair of mirthful blue eyes held more place than she would have cared to own even to herself. Cecilia dreamed a great deal nowadays, or she would have been quicker to read Elizabeth's weary face.

The month passed on. Elizabeth

learned, after a hard struggle, that her "ad." drawings were even less acceptable than her illustrations. She could not letter, and her work had not the "snap and attractiveness" that would "catch the eye of the public." "The eye of the public" began to be a nightmare to her. Still, she managed to sell a few designs at half-price, to be worked over by professionals.

Her attempts at posters had the same fate. She could not adapt herself to the prevailing Beardsley craze.

Her suppers for the month had consisted of crackers and water, eaten in strict secrecy in the studio; for her pride forbade her accepting anything from the girls, when she could not pay her share. She let them suppose that she dined in restaurants. Even Sid did not suspect the

extent of her self-privation. She grew thinner and paler, and her eyes were pitifully hollow.

"She's working too hard," soliloquized Sid, the observant, thinking of her former ruse. "I won't have it."

So, when Elizabeth came in one evening, she found one of her paintings gone; and in its place on the wall were tacked three ten-dollar bills.

"What does this mean?" she demanded.

"It means," said Sid, meekly, "that a lady who saw father's picture, and liked it, was in to-day. Wanted a picture. Said she couldn't wait until to-morrow, as she was to send it to Philadelphia on the 5.30 train. So I took the liberty of selling her that, as I once heard you mention thirty dollars as the price." ("I defy any

one to find a fib in that," she added mentally; for her former subterfuge had troubled her conscience, and she was trying to keep within the limits of facts in this case.)

Elizabeth took Sid by the shoulders, and looked into her eyes. "That's not so," she said, giving her a shake.

"It is!" cried Sid, stoutly. "It is!"

"What was the lady's name and address?" inquired Elizabeth, more mildly.

Sid began to blush. "Oh, I — I don't remember — exactly," she stammered. She was angry with herself for this show of embarrassment.

"Now that's a fib, I know," said Elizabeth. "You took it. How dare you, Sid Welch? Tell me at once what you have done with it, and take back this money. I won't have it!"

"You shall! I won't!" cried Sid, incoherently, bursting into tears. "The painting *is* on its way to Philadelphia. And it *was* bought by a lady who admired father's. It's a pity — if you can't sell me — a picture — as well as some cold, heartless, unappreciative thing from outside. But you can't help yourself; for I've got the picture, and you can't get it back now."

Elizabeth looked helpless. "It isn't right," she said weakly. Sobs always conquered her as quickly as if she had been a man.

"It is! it is!" cried Sid. "Oh, my dear, do be good to me, and let me help you! I have more than I need; and I can't see you killing yourself by inches with work you hate, when I know you could succeed so well if you would only

borrow a little money. Don't be selfish about it. Please don't,— please!"

Sid's arms were about Elizabeth, and she was pleading with all her impassioned force. And Elizabeth yielded.

"Is it selfish?" she said wearily. "Well, maybe you are right. And I can pay it back when my house sells,— if it ever does."

"And you'll take it?" cried Sid, dancing like a child in her delight. "And let me share until luck turns? And paint something for the spring exhibition, dear? It will get in this time, I know."

Elizabeth nodded, with a miserable little smile. She was completely conquered. Hunger and exhaustion had been Sid's able assistants.

"Girls! girls!" cried Maud, rushing in. "Oh, I wish we had a window that

looked on the street! These old skylights! Who do you think is coming down the street?"

"Who? who?" queried Sid, the excitable, turning her mind instantly to the new subject of interest.

"It's Cecilia — and — Mr. Douglas Cameron!" said Maud. "And they were talking so busily that they didn't see me at all, though I walked along on the opposite side of the street for ever so far. Doesn' that look romantic?"

"Don't, get nonsense into your head, child," said Elizabeth, wearily, "and make romances out of such commonplace courtesies."

Maud looked a trifle resentful.

"You needn't be so lofty," she said. "He has called here three times in the last month, and I know"—

But the entrance of Cecil, with a pleasant, "What do you know, Maud?" stopped the discussion. Maud and Sid fled to the dining-room, where they whispered and laughed gleefully to the accompaniment of Cecil's dreamy music.

Elizabeth, egged on by Sid, began to make tentative sketches for her exhibition picture. She finally found an arrangement that suited her,— the long, graceful figure of a girl lying on a couch, teasing a parrot on a perch at her feet with a peacock's feather. Sid insisted on posing for her; and Elizabeth could not refuse, especially as Sid's bright brown hair was "quite ideal" against the dull green of the sofa-cushion on which her head rested.

The painting was finally finished, and sent in at the last moment. And, after

cruel weeks of waiting, it was accepted. Better still, it was given one of the best places on the walls and a very good notice in the newspapers.

Mr. Cameron, who had become quite friendly with the girls since the Christmas dinner episode, was, on his earnest plea, admitted to share the Camp rejoicing, and to escort the girls, in their best bibs and tuckers, to the private view. They stared with unlimited delight at Raphael's painting, until the confused artist dragged them away to look at work by more noted people and to be introduced to famous folk, whose names Maud treasured up to write home to her people, that they might roll them as sweet morsels under their tongues.

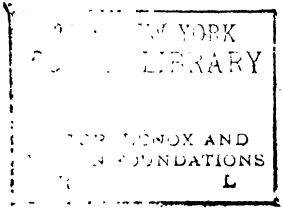
Then they went home to the little studio supper, whose crowning dish, a

lobster in a nest of crisp green lettuce, had been ordered by Sid from the "best place in town, as nothing was too good to celebrate Raphael's triumph."

Raphael, somewhat amused and embarrassed as well as touched, was queen of the festive board, and sat at the head of the table, crowned with a wreath of wax olive leaves that usually adorned the studio dummy. There was plenty of hearty pleasure in this her first success; and there were prophecies that it was only the turning of the tide of fortune, which would soon flow strong her way.

Indeed, it seemed that the prophecies were right; for only the next day came a caller. Elizabeth received him with due dignity in her studio, where the two stayed a long time. The noise of the moving of pictures and the rise and fall of voices in

Raphaelina.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conversation floated out to the girls, who were in Cecilia's room, dancing softly with curiosity and excitement, and speculating wildly on the nature of "that man's" business.

"For he is rich," said Sid. "One could tell that."

"And he has a splendid face," said Cecil. "Such nice white hair and kindly eyes!"

"She's going to the door with him," whispered Maud, kneeling to peer through the keyhole. "Oh, I wish they wouldn't talk so long!"

"How beautifully he bows!" murmured Sid, who had taken Maud's place at the keyhole. Then, as the door closed, they all burst at once into the little hall. Raphael was leaning against the wall, looking very calm, except for the tell-tale

brilliancy of her eyes and the tremor of her hands.

"Who is he?" "Did he give you an order?" "What did he want?" they demanded, all in one breath.

"My exhibition picture is sold," she answered quietly.

With three simultaneous shrieks of delight they fell upon her, wringing her hand, patting her back, and talking all at once in their delight. She quite disappeared for a moment under the avalanche of excited girls, then emerged, dishevelled and red.

"And he wants me to paint his portrait, and we're to begin Wednesday."

Another demonstrative chorus of delight.

"And he gave me a check in part payment," Elizabeth went on, losing her

self-control for a moment, and waving it wildly; "and, O Sid, Sid, it will pay all my debt to you, and leave me all I need for months!"

Sid flushed. "Now, Raph," she said wrathfully, "you hush! That's our secret."

"No! I shall tell them now," cried Elizabeth, struggling with the fingers wherewith Sid vainly tried to close her mouth. "They ought to know. Girls, she watched me when I was struggling so and repelling all help and sympathy, because I was so wickedly proud; and finally, as she couldn't do anything with me by fair means, she stole — actually stole — a picture from my walls, and left some bills in its place. And she made me keep them, and has given me more and more, and posed for me and made me

work for this exhibition. And that it has been a success is all her doing,— all. And the money I can give back, but what she has done "— Elizabeth paused. Her face was beautifully tender and humble. "I can never repay you, Sid," she said in a low voice.

But Sid had fled; and the girls, following her, found her in Cecil's room, with her head buried in a sofa-pillow. She sat up, laughing, but with a very red and somewhat tear-stained face.

"O Sid, I didn't mean to!" cried Raph, in consternation, going down on her knees beside her friend. "I didn't think you'd mind so much!"

"What a dramatic tableau!" laughed Sid, with a little catch in her breath. "Here, cruel tyrant, I forgive you. But it wasn't fair, Raphy,— it really wasn't fair.

And, as I feel somewhat tumbled up in my mind with all this excitement, I'm going to calm down by journeying to see about a position the dramatic agent wrote me about. Cecil has her class" ("Of one!" put in Cecil), "Raphael is going to be rushed with portraits and things, and Maud is improving each shining hour. I'm the only drone in the hive, and I really feel that I must reform. Good-by, all." And she departed with a gay nod.

"Just like my dear, generous girl," said Maud, looking affectionately after her.

"She is the best soul that ever lived," said Cecil, warmly; "but wouldn't she be angry if you said so to her?"

Raphael said nothing, but her looks were eloquent.

SID HAS ADVENTURES

CHAPTER V.

Sid has Adventures.

"WANT to hear the story of my day's adventures, girls?" inquired Sid, as the four were lounging in the studio that evening. Of course, they welcomed the suggestion with delight. It was just the proper hour for tales.

"Well," Sid began, "when I left you, I went to the dramatic agent to see about that position; and the D. A. referred me to Mr. Duke, of the Sixth Avenue Theatre. So I trotted over to Sixth Avenue. The first thing Mr. Duke did was to address me as 'My dear'! I looked daggers at him, but it didn't affect him in the least. I suppose he's used to stage daggers, and

thought they were that kind. He inquired where I'd played before. That wilted me; and I meekly told him, 'Nowhere.'

"'Hum-m, that's bad. What the mischief did Brown mean by sending me a green girl?' he said. 'I wanted you for Evaline in my new spectacular; but, if you ain't been on before — Say, let's see you march, m' dear.'

"I was mad as a hornet, but I trotted up and down the room; and presently he shouted: 'Got it, sure enough! I guess I can give you something, after all. I'll bill Nell White for Blanche's place, and let you go in the chorus!' In the chorus, indeed!

"I'd heard I was to take the place of some one who had a fall. So I said, 'Is Blanche the woman who was hurt?'

"'Yes, m' dear,' said Mr. Duke.

'Blanche Pradu, 'twas. Sorry to lose her, too,— mighty sorry: migh-ty sorry.'

"Well, it suddenly flashed over me that Blanche was an old school friend of mine, who had married an actor a few years ago and was disowned by her family in consequence,— the old story.

"Meanwhile Mr. Duke was saying: 'We may as well settle this at once, m' dear. Just sign your name here. You'll lead the chorus at'—

"'I beg your pardon, sir,' I said loftily. 'You are mistaken. I have no intention of leading your chorus or any chorus, nor of playing at any time for a manager who treats his employees with the insulting familiarity you have used toward me. When I go on the stage, it will be under a manager who understands the conduct expected from a gentleman.' And I

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marched out with my head up high, and banged the door. I heard him drop into a chair, and gasp out: 'Highty, tighty! Bless — my — soul!' as if my righteous indignation had quite overcome him."

Sid had told her story well, mimicking herself and Mr. Duke by turns; and the girls laughed heartily over the comical amazement of the discomfited manager.

"I stopped," went on Sid, "just long enough to get Blanche's address; and then I shook the dust of the building from my shoes forever, and started to hunt her up. I found her up in a miserable little tenement house, where she lives with another member of the 'perfession.' And, girls, I declare the sight of them in that horrible little hole made me want to renounce the stage forever."

"You, who have always been such a faithful devotee of it!" teased Maud.

Sid pulled her long braid for punishment, and went on:—

"They wanted to take Blanche to the hospital when she was hurt, but she couldn't bear to leave her child with strangers. Her husband is dead, and she has nothing to depend on but her own work; and, since the accident, of course that is gone. So the other members of the 'perfesh' took up a collection, and made quite a purse for Blanche and the baby; and that impertinent manager headed the list with fifty dollars. Wasn't that splendid of him?"

"That was nice," said Maud.

"Was Blanche seriously hurt?" asked Cecilia.

"What did you do?" queried Raphael.

"I? Oh, nothing but talk awhile, and promise to come again and see her occa-

sionally. I'm afraid the hurt is rather serious, Cis. They don't seem to be very sure about it, and she looks badly. But wasn't it lucky I found her? I used to be so fond of Blanche. She was one of those soft little things every one feels bound to take care of, you know."

"Lucky for her," said Raphael, *sotto voce.*

"Hasn't any one else a story?" asked Cecil. "I want to hear some more."

"Ladies," said Maud, bowing in imitation of Sid's best stage manner, "behold me! I was promoted to heads to-day!"

"What do you mean, child?" demanded Cecil.

"Oh, given leave to draw heads instead of hands and feet, which I've been on all winter," said Maud. "I didn't

think it would take so long to make any progress. I expected to be drawing from life by this time. But 'art is long, and'"—

"Now, Maud!"

"O Maud be merciful!"

"Don't impose that antique on us, Infant!"

"I won't," said Maud, obligingly, "if any one else has any news. What have you done to-day, Raphaelina?"

"Fixed my portrait canvas," replied Raphael, laconically.

"You begin to-morrow, don't you?"

Raphael nodded.

"Well, my deary," said Cecil, "may your wark be a braw success, and may fame and fortune be wi' ye!"

Sid laughed. "How Scotch Cis is getting!" she said. "I saw a new volume

of songs on her piano. So I opened it; and there was 'Bonnie Leslie,' and 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' and 'Weel may the Keel row,' and a lot of other dear old ballads. Where did you get it, Cis?"

"John gave it to me," replied Cecil, composedly; "but I fancy his uncle bought it." There are some fine old bagpipy airs in it. Come into my room, girls, and try them."

As they followed Cecil, Maud looked meaningly at Sid and raised one eyebrow comically, to which peculiar telegraphic signal Sid responded by a frown and a violent shake of the head.

"You'll see," whispered Maud. "Just wait!"

The days were very busy ones now in Camp Arcady. Cecil and Maud were away,— the one with her little pupil, to whom she gave more time, as her class showed no sign of increasing, the other working desperately at her drawing; for she had expected to do so much, and what she had done seemed so pitifully little that it seemed to her she made no progress.

Raphael was busy with her portrait; and already — such is the virtue of one success — the number of visitors to her studio had made it expedient for her to institute an "at home" day.

A big upright easel and other marks of prosperity appeared in her studio; and she began to take on a becoming air of cheerfulness, and to look less lean and hungry.

Sid was also much away. She said

she had "found some work, but wouldn't tell about it,—not just yet." So the girls perforce waited, and smiled and wondered over the little mystery.

"What can keep Sid?" said Maud, anxiously, one evening, as she opened the hall door for the twentieth time. "Her supper has been waiting an hour, and it's all spoiled. She isn't usually so late."

"She went to visit that friend of hers — Blanche — again," observed Raphael. "She has spent most of her time there for the last few weeks."

"Oh, that's her work that she talks about so mysteriously, is it?" cried Maud.

"I'm just beginning to understand Sid," said Cecilia, meditatively; "and I don't believe she will ever go on the stage."

"Why not?"

"Acting is too abstract for Sid. She enjoys doing it for fun or charity; but she hasn't enough of the — the — oh, I can't explain it, but she can't take it in a cold, unimpulsive, professional spirit. Sid was meant to make life brighter for people just by living. She is a dear sweet girl, but she hasn't the *self-centredness* of an artist."

Raphael laughed at this lucid explanation, tipped by a wholly original word.

"That's about as clear as mud, Cissy," she said.

"There's Sid's step now!" cried Maud, running to the door. "My dear girl, where in the world have you been? I was getting so anxious — Why, Sid Welch" (in a different tone), "what *have* you got in your arms?"

Sid walked over to the couch and laid down her burden, whose nature was so obvious as to make Maud's question unnecessary, and then turned and looked at the girls with a funny mixture of trepidation, defiance, and amusement in her expressive face. Her eyes were red as if with recent tears; and her lips twitched as though her sadness, hardly under control yet, was mixed with a strong sense of absurdity.

"Why — why," cried Cecil, bending over the couch, "it's a" —

"Hush!" said Sid. "Talk lower. Yes, it's a baby. And I wouldn't waken it if I were you,— unless you know better what to do with it than I do."

"Where did you find it?" queried Elizabeth, as she touched the rosy cheek softly. She spoke as if babies might be

picked up on the streets, like stray kittens.

"It was Blanche's," said Sid, with a little sob. "She died to-day."

"Poor child!" whispered Cecil. "Poor little child!"

"She begged me to take it to her father," went on Sid. "She thought that, though he would never see her after her marriage, his anger couldn't extend to the little one, and there was no one else to take care of it. I didn't know what to do with a child at all, but, when she begged me, I couldn't say no; and it made her so happy. But, O my little girl, my poor little girl, you have a sad heritage!"

As Sid bent over the couch, the blue eyes opened, the little hands went out appealingly. She gathered the child in her arms; and, with a soft murmur of

"Nanny Siddy," the curly head drooped on her shoulder, and Baby was asleep again. Sid stood for a moment, looking down at her, then carried her away with an expression on her face that the girls had never seen there before.

The room was very silent for a little while. Maud looked stealthily at Cecil, and caught her wiping her eyes behind the piano lid. Raphael was staring hard at vacancy, with set lips. Maud, therefore, thought it best to study the figures in the Turkish rug with deep attention.

"She is sleeping ever so sweetly," said Sid, coming back at last. "I never had a baby in charge before. I didn't know how they looked when they slept. They're beautiful."

"She seemed pretty friendly with you. She called you 'Aunty Siddy,'" observed Maud.

"And nestled up to you as though she were quite at home," added Cecil.

"She took a great fancy to me from the first," said Sid. "I always thought I'd like children, but I never knew enough about 'em to be sure. I'm mortally afraid I'll hurt their little bodies or their little feelings. I don't know what to do. I'm actually afraid of her. Cecil, Maud, you'll have to help me, or I'll do her some awful damage, I'm sure."

"You don't ask me to help," said Elizabeth, in a ruffled tone. Whereat the others laughed.

SID'S BABY

CHAPTER VI.

Sid's Baby.

"IT'S Saturday, girls," said Sid, as she stood drumming on the kitchen window one morning. "You're free, Cecil; Maud can take a holiday, so can Raph; and I'm constitutionally at leisure. Let's take Blanche to the park."

The motion was adopted by acclamation. And Maud, "like a well-conducted person," was soon "cutting bread and butter" for the lunch basket, while Sid scrubbed Blanche's face, and Raph and Cecil got the coats and hats.

In less time than it takes to tell it the merry party piled on top of the rickety stage, and started on their long, jolly,

jolty ride. It was a beautiful day. The trees in the squares were in tiny leaf, looking like delicate lacework against the sky. Here and there a wistaria hung its purple tassels up the front of some old house on a side street; and Maud, looking at them with misty eyes, thought of a certain little house out West. How the front of it was covered last spring with that tender green and purple! She gulped a little, and turned to spar desperately with Sid.

They reached the park at last; and Blanchette, with shrieks of delight, made excursions on the soft grass, only to run back to "Nanny Siddy" with a dandelion, a blade of grass, or a tiny pebble. Sid had lost the awkwardness of ignorance, as the baby clung to her and would have no other waiting-maid, although she gra-

The Baby.

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ciously bestowed smiles on Maud and Cecilia, and grave, half-awed attention on Elizabeth. Nanny Siddy was hers, her own; and, when she mourned in her baby way for "marmar," only Nanny Siddy could comfort her. Sid accepted this with comical wonder. "For I'm not the sweet creature one would expect a baby to cling to," she said humbly. But she soon grew to feel it the most natural thing in the world for a little hand to nestle in her own or drag at her skirt, for a little foot to follow her, and a baby voice demand a hundred hourly attentions to "B'anchie" or "Dollie."

"My dear, I quite like it," she said. "I wish you never had invested in a grandfather. They are not proper possessions for one so young."

When noon came, the girls spread their

lunch on a park bench in a sequestered nook; and, having despatched it with vigorous appetites, they yielded to Blanche's plea to "see ve animals," and strolled slowly toward the lower end of the park.

"Why," cried Maud, suddenly, as they turned into a new pathway, "there's John!"

"And Mr. Cameron," added Cecilia, with a quick instinctive smoothing of her ruffled locks.

The gentleman behind the wheeled chair bowed and smiled, and the little boy in its depths waved his hat and shouted gayly.

"Hurrah! isn't this splendid?" he said with satisfaction, as the two parties met and shook hands.

"I echo John," said Mr. Cameron. "I haven't seen any of you for a long

while,— not since the little celebration at the beginning of Miss Danton's greatness. I hear her name on all sides now."

Blanche was formally introduced; and, instantly, to John's delight, she clambered into the chair, and stared solemnly at him as the best way of making friends.

"Where were you going?" inquired Mr. Cameron.

"Taking Baby to see the animals," said Cecilia. "A day in the park isn't perfect for a child without that."

"John and I were strolling aimlessly. May we go with you? and then the little one can ride."

They made room for him on the pathway, and walked on, talking of the beauty of the day and the freshness of the park.

"But it's only a park, after all," Maud sighed, "and only makes one long the

more for some real wilds, where one can pull flowers without thinking of policemen, and run over acres of grass, if one wants to."

"There speaks the girl of the free West," said Mr. Cameron.

"Maud is tired of the flesh-pots of Egypt," laughed Sid, who was walking ahead, listening by turns to the chatter of Blanche and John and the scarcely graver conversation behind her. "Maud wants forty years in the wilderness, or thinks she does; but she will tire of her wilderness in a few months, and be ready for the flesh-pots again."

"No, I won't," said Maud, positively. "Never again."

Mr. Cameron smiled. "Look, Miss Maud," he said, pointing to a tree covered with tropical-looking, waxy flowers of

pink and white. "Is there anything so beautiful in your Western wilds?"

Maud laughed, but shook her head.

"An apple-tree is sweeter," she said.

"You are loyal; and I think you're right. I have a whole orchard of apple-trees up the river, a few miles; and I don't know a sight more beautiful than that orchard in bloom."

Maud drew a long breath.

"Will you come and see them?" he added.

"Oh, oh! could we?" cried Maud.

'Could we arrange it, Miss Howard?" he asked, turning to Cecilia. "I can send the carriage to take you to the wharf some day, when the trees are at their best; and we can go up the river in Mr. Strong's launch, which is always at my disposal. Mrs. Strong will go with us,

I'm sure; and it will be a great pleasure to me," he added earnestly.

The girls looked at one another, breathless with delight; but their radiant faces left no doubt of their answer, and Mr. Cameron was satisfied.

"Then it's settled," he said gayly; "and we will arrange for Thursday week if you like."

They wandered through the menagerie, laughed at the ungainly camels and the funny monkeys, listened to the roar of the lions, and threw peanuts to the deer. Then Mr. Cameron bought a great bunch of lilacs for Maud, and another for Blanche, put the girls on the stage, and watched with a quizzical smile until they were out of sight.

"Which do you like best, John?" he asked.

"Miss Howard," responded John, promptly.

"Why?"

"Miss Danton looks as if she could do things, and Miss Welch is real nice and funny, and Miss Maud is pretty; but, somehow, they aren't any of them as sweet as my Miss Howard," said John, somewhat at a loss to explain himself. And again Mr. Cameron smiled.

"You are a lad of excellent judgment, John," he said with conviction.

Cecilia was dreamy that night, Elizabeth thoughtful, and Sid preoccupied. Both of them watched Cecil gravely. Maud grew a little tearful as she put her lilacs in water, holding them against her face to hide her trembling lips and whispering to their fragrant petals,—

"O mother, I do want you so!"

As for Blanche, she felt that she was singing "Tinkle, tinkle, 'ittle 'tar," to a very unappreciative audience. So she fell asleep during the interval between the two verses, with her head in Sid's lap.

The next evening Cecilia and Maud, coming home together at tea-time, found their small domain in confusion. Sid was ramping and roaring through the hall and studio, red and wrathful, shaking her fist at an imaginary somebody, and calling him all manner of unpleasant names. Raphael followed her anxiously, trying to soothe her; while Blanche, who had discovered the table set for tea, was contentedly browsing over the sugar-bowl and jam-pot, her countenance highly ornamented with specimens of both substances.

"What is the matter, Sid?" asked

Cecil, anxiously; while Maud made a dash for Blanche, just in time to save the last spoonful of jam, and bore her off, shrieking, to the wash-bowl for necessary repairs to her complexion.

"Read that!" cried Sid, flinging a ball of crumpled paper at Cecil. "Oh, the cold-blooded wretch!"

Cecil dodged, caught the paper, and, smoothing it out on the door, read with some difficulty: —

"Miss Marguerite Welch:

Dear Madame,— While I recognize your good intention in writing to me about a child you have been indiscreet enough to take charge of,— which child you call my grand-daughter,— I regret to inform you that you are mistaken. I recognize no claim of any woman named Blanche Pradu, nor of the child of that woman. My daughter I have counted as dead for five long

years, and I will never put it in the power of any human being to make me suffer as she did.

I beg that you will consider this letter as final. Very respectfully,

J. D. BLACKWELL.

"Is that Baby's grandfather?" asked Maud, appearing in the doorway with the infant. "You don't mean he won't take her?"

"Won't even acknowledge that she has any claim on him at all," cried Sid. "Oh, how can a man be so cruel as to cherish hatred against his dead daughter or her innocent child!"

"I can understand it," said Cecilia, thoughtfully. "He loved his child selfishly, but very truly, I suppose; and when she disappointed him, and disobeyed,— he probably had some old-fashioned prejudice against actors and

acting, too,— he let his anger kill all the love and make him morbid,— eat into his mind and heart, just as a disease does into the body. Oh, can't you see that what he has written tortures him, and that he thinks of his child always, and is really half-mad with grief, poor man!"

"Poor *man!*" echoed Sid, fiercely. "Is he to be pitied?"

"Yes, he is," began Cecil, firmly.

Maud thought it time to interfere, for Sid's eyes were blazing.

"The wickedness of Baby's grandfather is great," she said whimsically; "but I can't forget that I'm hungry, and the tea-table is set. Come and indulge, dear people. You can argue with calmer minds after a taste of the cup that cheers."

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country home, and be brought up like their own daughter. I'll write to mother about it if you wish me to, Sid."

"Or I will write to my home, though in a little town like that there are sometimes queer ideas about actresses' children," added Maud.

Sid was lying on the rug in the calm that always followed a storm with her. She sat up, saying with decision: —

"I won't have you folks worried to death about that child. I promised her mother I'd take care of her, and I shan't crawl out of it by sending her away among strangers. I'll adopt her myself!"

"You!"

"Sid Welch! That is great!"

"You're a proper one to bring up a child!" came with a shout of laughter from her three companions.

In spite of indignation and anxiety, the others smiled as they followed Maud to the table; but Sid cut her meat fiercely, as if it were "that man," Raphael looked grave and disturbed, Cecilia thoughtful, and Maud, forgetting the hunger she had spoken of, ate nothing herself while feeding Blanche, with pitying tenderness, until that infant was stuffed to repletion.

When the evening's work was over, the community gathered for council.

"What shall we do!" asked Raphael, helplessly.

"Baby must be taken care of," said Sid, "and I must see to it. I promised her mother that."

"There are people near our house who might like to adopt a child," said Cecilia, hesitatingly. "She would have a good

country home, and be brought up like their own daughter. I'll write to mother about it if you wish me to, Sid."

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"You're a proper one to bring up a child!" came with a shout of laughter from her three companions.

Sid flushed, but said firmly: "You needn't laugh. I'm in earnest. It's an inspiration, and this is my plan. Father has a little house on Long Island,—a place where we never go, and it is shut up most of the time. I'm going to ask him to let me have the house for the summer, and give me my money regularly instead of in dabs and by fits; and I'm going to send an old woman that I found on Tenth Street, wearing her life out in a little sewing-room, down to the place for housekeeper. I know she can do it; for I took tea with her once, and her rolls and coffee were delicious"—

"Another of Sid's pensioners," put in Cecil, parenthetically. "I suspected she had a host of them, from the way her money flew."

Sid paid no attention to this, except to blush a little, as she went on: —

"So I know she could run things straight, and it would be a mercy to her; and I'd put it as a favor to me, so her pride wouldn't be hurt. And I'll take Blanchie, and get a lot of other poor children to come and visit her,— children whose parents are too poor to send them away for the summer, and too proud to let 'em go on charity, and they can get a breath of sea air and sunshine; and, oh, it will be jolly! I know I'm not fit to take care of a little child," humbly; "but she loves me, and I'll do my best, with my old lady's help. You can laugh if you want to."

Sid paused, out of breath; for she had spoken rapidly. But no one laughed. No one felt like it. At last Cecilia said gently: —

"Are you sure it isn't too big an undertaking, Sid? Can you carry it through? And won't it cost a great deal?"

"No," said Sid, answering the last question first: "living is very cheap down there; and it won't be hard work, for there is my old woman, poor thing! She needs some place to stay. And the house is only a little six-room thing. So I will begin on a small scale,— provided, always, that father will let me have it, and consent to my keeping Blanche. I don't think he'll object, for he doesn't generally bother much about what I do. He'll smile, and say to mother: 'Another fad of hers. Suppose we may as well humor the child.' Just as I'd buy a monkey on a stick for Baby."

Sid laughed, but there was a little tone

of bitterness in the laugh which made Maud look very sober.

"Never mind, Sweetheart," added Sid, jumping up and pecking a little kiss at her friend's cheek, to dispel the troubled look that she hated to see, "I don't. I'll go write to him at once, and tell him about it. He's a dear good daddy, after all, according to his lights." And she danced out of the room.

THE CAMP'S LAST FROLIC

CHAPTER VII.

The Camp's Last Frolic.

"WAKE up, Maud! The sky is bright and clear as Spain's! It's going to be an ideal day. I'm so glad!"

"Um-m-m," muttered Maud, drowsily.

"Lazybones! I know what'll rouse you, though," cried Sid, reaching for the little pitcher of water on the window-sill. Maud slumbered on, sweetly unconscious. Sid hesitated a moment. Then "douche!" went the cold water.

"Ow! Bah! Piff! Poh! You horrid thing!" cried Maud, as she sat up, dripping like a mermaid, while Sid laughed merrily.

"You did wake up at last, Missy," she cried. "I thought I could rouse you."

"Oh, yes, I'm awake! I'll prove that I'm awake!" And Maud seized the big sponge, plunged it into the basin, and made a dash for Sid. Away they went, into the studio, over the model-stand, behind the screen, through the kitchen, and finally brought up on the floor under Cecil's piano, where Maud scrubbed Sid's face until she begged for mercy.

"What is the matter?" asked Cecilia, drowsily, sitting up and rubbing her eyes. And

"What's all this row about, children?" came from a long white figure, standing amazed in the doorway.

"Just Sid getting me awake," replied Maud, meekly, disentangling herself from her friend and from the piano legs, and shaking back her long hair.

"Do you realize, infants," said Sid, from the floor, "that it is the day we are to picnic at Mr. Cameron's place up the Hudson! and that the carriage will be here in just half an hour! If I weren't on hand to wake you up, and shake some life into you, you might sleep until doomsday. But one's efforts are never appreciated."

Sid spoke in a moralizing tone, as she stretched out on the rug, with her head on the pedals, and looked up at the ceiling with a martyrized expression.

"So it is!" cried Cecil, jumping up. "Half an hour? We must hurry!"

"Better get up, Sid," advised Raphael, disappearing into her room. "We haven't much time."

Maud helped Sid up by the hair of her head, and, dodging to escape the sponge

flung at her, fled to her own room, followed closely by her victim; and they proceeded to dress themselves and Blanche, with many scuffles and shrieks of laughter.

They were barely ready when Mr. Cameron's haughty coachman knocked at the door.

"There's the carriage, girls! Where is my hat? Maud, you tie on Blanche's cap. Cis, don't prink so long. Raph and I are all ready. Come on. Good-morning, James. Don't you love to wait for us?"

James grinned affably as he responded, "An' I don't know any one I'd ruther wait for, Miss," which he meant for a great compliment.

It was delightful to drive through the cool, bright morning air up the long

avenues, filled, at this early hour, only with carts and drays; to watch the workingmen and the clerks hurrying to their business; and to feel the delicious freedom of leisure.

When they reached the wharf, they found all in readiness for them. The little naphtha launch, unpicturesque, but decidedly jaunty, lay alongside the quay, looking like a saucy little puppy tied to a very big kennel. Mr. Cameron was pacing up and down, stopping now and then to laugh and talk with a plump, gray-haired matron, sitting with John in the well-cushioned stern of the launch.

"Good-morning," he called, hurrying up to help the girls out of the carriage. "Now isn't this pleasant?"

"The beautifulest blue day that could ever be!" cried Sid, enthusiastically; but

sharp-eyed Maud fancied Mr. Cameron was referring to something beside the clear morning sky.

"I'll introduce you to Mrs. Strong before you go on board," laughed their host; "for the wharf is so high and the launch so low that you will have to step on the cabin roof, and climb down romantically into her arms, with the help of the railing and seat. So you want to know her first. Mrs. Strong, these are John's Best Friends, of whom he has told you so much, — Miss Danton, whose painting you have seen, Miss Howard, John's Very Particular Friend, Miss Welch, Miss Hastings, and Baby Blanche, protégée of the four. Now, Blanchie, you go first. Hold out your arms, Mrs. Strong." And he gave Baby a clever toss that landed her in the ample cradle

held up for her, where she gurgled and laughed ecstatically, and begged him to "do it aden." But Mrs. Strong, after a hearty hug of "the dear, sweet thing," passed her on to John, and turned to help the others.

Raphael stepped on board sedately; but a big tug steamed past just as Mr. Cameron helped Sid on to the cabin roof, and the little launch danced on the waves in the big tug's wake with a mischievous vigor that made Sid wave her arms like a windmill, and shriek wildly, to the edification and delight of a crowd of small boys who had gathered to watch the proceedings. Sid finally righted herself, and leapt to the little deck, catching her skirt in the railing, giving it a shocking tear, and sending her hat flying into the water, whence she and John fished it, and hung

it over the flag-staff to dry. The others had meanwhile embarked without mishap. Cecil pinned up the damaged skirt; and Sid declared "it was really better than ever, being artistically draped now."

The little boat slowly turned and headed for mid-stream. For a moment the delight of looking filled them all. Below, in the blue morning mists, stretched the great river, widening to the bay; the wakening, shadowy city on one side, the sun-touched Palisades on the other. Above, to the north, the river curved, clear and blue, dotted with an occasional sail-boat, or a tug, dragging in its wake a long serpentine trail of flat-boats; one of them, maybe, having a rude living-room built on it, a woman hanging out some clothes over its railings, and some children dangling their bare feet

over its edge. John and Blanche would wave their hands to these little waifs with gay friendliness, and the waifs would wave affably back with their tattered hats and shout generous greetings.

After breakfast in the little cabin, eaten with keen appetites, Mr. Cameron, who was in a gay, boyish mood, joined the children's play with Sid and Maud. Mrs. Strong cornered Elizabeth, and began to talk art to her, having conceived a vast admiration for the ability displayed in her exhibition painting. And Cecil sat in the stern, dreamily content, watching the water and the sky.

Then the boat must be explored, with Mrs. Strong and John for guides; while Cecil, in her comfortable nook, took care of Blanche and talked to Mr. Cameron. The little seven-by-ten cabin was duly

admired, the seven-by-four kitchen exclaimed over, the tiny engine-room peered into, and the steering apparatus investigated. And Maud and Sid must try holding the wheel themselves, with such marvellous results that Mr. Cameron and the engineer came plunging out to the forward deck to discover what the awful darts and turns and mad evolutions of the little boat meant.

Maud laughingly resigned the wheel to the proper steersman; and they all returned to the forward deck, where Cecil was leaning over the rail, examining the east bank of the river. The "Sketch Book," open at the legend of Sleepy Hollow, was beside her.

"We are near Irving-land," she explained, "so I've been getting into the mood. Can you see Sunnyside, John?"

John pointed out the plain, friendly-looking house; and they all looked long and reverentially at the roof that had sheltered the kindly, gentle man who was everybody's friend through all his clean and sunny life. They examined Tarrytown with interest, and craned their necks for a glimpse of Sleepy Hollow, the steeple of whose little church they could just see through the trees; and they felt, somehow, that they had shaken hands with the spirit of Irving, across the gulf of years.

A few miles above the Hollow they came to anchor (by throwing a rope around a post) at a little boat-house on the east bank.

"This is John's and my ancestral home," said Mr. Cameron, leaping on shore. "Welcome to hall and bower,

fair ladies!" And he handed them out with a cavalier's flourish that delighted Sid.

Up the broad gravelled path they wandered, to the old square house, through the old-fashioned gardens with their budding shrubbery and their beds of tulips and crocuses. Then the old colonial mansion was explored, and Maud and Elizabeth revelled in the fine old portraits and the few well-chosen modern paintings.

"You shall be represented here some day, Miss Danton," laughed Mr. Cameron; "and I'll point to my Danton as the gem of the collection."

Cecil, who loved quaint furniture even better than paintings, had wandered away with John and Mrs. Strong to see some "dear old four-poster beds and swell

front dressers and spindle-legged chairs and things." Sid and Blanche had disappeared.

"Gone to the orchard, I think," said Mr. Cameron, "to see about the luncheon. You would rather have it out under the trees, wouldn't you?"

"Indeed, we would," cried Maud. "Cis! Mrs. Strong! John! come on! We're going to adjourn to the orchard."

So they all trooped out into the air again, and laughed to find Sid absorbed and revelling in a gorgeous bed of crimson and gold tulips; while Baby had found a trough of water near by, and, making a boat of her little overshoe, was giving several unwilling grub-worms a trip "up ve river," and getting herself well splashed in the process.

Sid and Maud raced to the orchard for

the privilege of making the coffee; and Sid, winning, set about building a tiny fire, while Maud buried herself in apple-blooms and delight, and scoffed at her triumphant friend.

"Now I will show you," said Sid, in a didactic tone, "how to make such coffee as never can be tasted except in the woods. Give me the pot, please, Mr. Cameron, and you may touch a match to my twigs, if you will; but I'll do the rest. Thank you. Cis, bring me the water! The coffee, John! That's right. Now, Raphy, just hand me one of those eggs. Ah, this will be delicious! I do love to make coffee."

"One, two, three, four, five people! Does it take you all for Sid's coffee?" called Maud, as she went to help Cecilia and Mrs. Strong, who, scornfully reject-

ing the table provided for them, were setting the luncheon out on the ground in true picnic fashion.

"This is quite ideal," she added: "it is more Arcadian than Camp Arcady itself. Look out, Sid.! there goes your coffee!"

Sid wildly grasped the pot, whose contents, forgotten for the moment, were gently sizzling on the coals. She rescued the coffee, but at the expense of her long-suffering skirt, which got a liberal douche on its front that put a finishing touch to it.

"Never mind," she said philosophically: "the dress is now at the point where it can't be hurt. 'He that is down need fear no fall,' you know; and the coffee is perfect, and plenty of it left,—if I do say it myself, as shouldn't." And she sniffed ecstatically.

The coffee was delicious, and, reinforced by the contents of Mr. Cameron's hampers, made a most tempting show. John and Blanche found a bond of sympathy in the jelly-dish, which reposed between them; and after luncheon they wandered off hand in hand to look at the puppies and kittens and the doves in the big barn.

"What a chivalrous little man he is!" said Cecil, smiling. "Watch him guide the little maiden's steps with his one free hand, as deferentially as a knight of yore."

"I don't know how he will get along without you this summer," said Mr. Cameron, glancing from her to Mrs. Strong and Raphael, Sid and Maud, who were arranging a quiet little game of croquet on a bit of open ground across the orchard.

"He thinks a great deal of you," he added, strolling quietly down over the hill with Cecilia.

"And I of him," said Cecil, warmly. "I shall miss him sadly, I know."

"You will be back next winter?"

Cecil shook her head. "The winter was an experiment for me," she said with sunny patience, "and it has failed. So I must try a new one."

Mr. Cameron pulled a lilac from the hedge beside him, and examined it with great interest.

"Miss Howard," he said, as he flung it down, "John can't live without you; and neither can I. If you begin a new experiment next winter, can it not be with me,— with me, my darling?"

The two soft hands went out to the strong brown ones, and rested there, while the brown eyes gave their answer to the blue.

At this interesting moment Sid looked up from her ball, and said impatiently: —

"Oh, dear! I wanted Cis and Mr. Cameron to take a hand in this game with us; and I declare they've gone off with Blanche and John, and the four of 'em are out of sight. Well, come on, anyway. Maud and I will beat you and Mrs. Strong, Raphael."

Of course, as Mr. Cameron and Cecil were out of sight, we can know no more of what they said or did for the next hour or so. But Sid and Maud had beaten their opponents twice on the well-fought field when the wanderers hove in sight over the brow of the hill, with the two children in front of them.

"Come and have a game," called Sid, excitedly gesticulating. "We've beaten two, and want a third. Come on."

"Too late!" called back Mr. Cameron. We'll have to embark at once, to get to

the city to-night. But I'll beat you a game next time you come, Miss Sid, for I shan't think this is the last time we'll have a picnic on my grounds."

The little launch rocked lazily at the water's edge, garlanded and laden with flowers. A great bunch of apple-blooms for Maud; brilliant tulips for Sid; for Raphael, daffodils; and, for Cecil, loads of early sweet violets.

The trip home was a very silent one. Sid and Maud tried to talk; but Raphael was studying the blaze of crimson and purple and gold behind the western hills, and the fiery reflection in the river. John was asleep, with his head in Cecil's lap. Mr. Cameron, at the extreme end of the deck, seemed to find pleasant thoughts in the glowing river; for he smiled to himself as he watched its waves. So at last every

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"Do you remember your first evening here, Maud?" asked Cecilia. "I can see you now standing there with Raphael, blushing like a peony."

"How scared I was!" laughed Maud. "Raphy was so big and solemn; and Sid, poor dear, talked so fast and so hard she took my breath away; and Cecil was the only refuge left. You looked like a good angel to me that night, Cis."

"And the plans we told at the tea-table," said Sid, smiling down on the little sleeping child. "How different it has all been!"

"Miss Marguerite Welch, the rising young actress of the day," quoted Maud, tossing a tulip at her feet, "here's a bouquet for you."

Sid shook her head. "How foolish that seems now!" she said, trying the

effect of the crimson cup against Baby's curls. "I am no genius, as our Raphy is, but, as you all do know, a commonplace sort of girl. Acting never was my real work."

"I think you've found your real work," said Cecil, gently, as she looked at the pretty picture.

"I had a letter from father to-day," said Sid, after a pause. "The tenderest letter! I told him about my plan, you know, for the summer cottage. He said: 'You shall have your cottage and income just as you wish, little girl; but first come home to me. I have been too long a stranger to my daughter; and I want her to forgive me for it, and to make me her helper and confidant in all her generous plans.' Isn't that beautiful of him? And I never thought he cared!" And the

bitterness that had so often shocked and troubled Maud was washed away forever in the one bright drop that fell on Blanche's curls, as Sid softly kissed them.

Raphael broke the little sympathetic pause.

"Will you be back again next winter, Maud?"

Maud shook her head. "I've thought it over," she said, earnestly, "and it isn't worth the sacrifice. I might be the one out of five hundred to gain fame and fortune at art, but it would mean years and years of such work and failure and loneliness and longing as I never dreamed could be. And, while I was struggling here, they would be pinching and contriving at home to get the money for me to spend, and we should all be miserable.

Mother needs me and longs for me, and my place is with her."

Cecil nodded approvingly, as Maud finished with unwonted earnestness. Raphael, in her shadowy corner, said nothing.

"What are you going to do, Cis?" asked Sid.

And then Cecilia blushed and stammered as she said, with her face hidden among her violets,—

"I — I — will be with mother all summer; and next fall — I — Mr. Cameron"—

"Cecilia Howard! I suspected as much!" cried Sid; though she had, on the contrary, been most strenuous in denying it.

And, "O Cecil, I'm so glad! And I know you will be happy! Just think

of being mistress of that beautiful big house, and all the lovely things in it!" cried Maud, in girlish delight at once over the romance and the more material beauties of Cecil's lot.

Then for a few moments they all talked at once, very fast.

"Raphael is the only one who has not told her plans," said Cecil, thoughtfully, after the flurry of excitement over her announcement had died down; "and she is the only one whose winter has brought the success she planned for."

Elizabeth, who had come forward to congratulate her friend, smiled a little wistfully as she stroked the soft brown hair.

"I don't think you would call your winter a failure, Cissy," she said: "it has not brought what you expected, but"—

"Something better far," said Cecilia, softly. "Yes, dear, it has."

"And the work Sid has found to do is so beautiful that I feel almost like envying her success," added Raphael, with a little smile for the Madonna group before her.

Sid nodded contentedly above the golden head, and said with a laugh: "To continue the moral reflections, here's Maud, who has learned a fine lesson,— to be content with the simple and cheap and satisfying things of life instead of struggling after the unattainable. But I shall be calling on you to help me with my 'Refuge for Young and Old' some day, sweetheart, and make a philanthropist of you, since you've given up art."

Maud laughed a little.

"But what will Raph do this summer?" asked Cecil.

"Go somewhere in the country and paint landscape," said Elizabeth, with a patient smile, "and come back next winter to my portraits and studies. I have no home. So I can't follow the example of you three."

There was just a little quiver in the quiet tones. Cecil's hands went up to clasp the two that rested on her hair.

"You shall have, dear," she cried tenderly, drawing Raphael down beside her. "Come home with me. Mother will be so glad! She will love you and scold you and pet you as if you belonged to her; and I'll share her with you, and you shall tramp and paint as much as you like. And my sister and brother will just take you right to their hearts. Come with me, Raphy. Do come!"

And self-contained Raphael put her

head down on Cecilia's lap, like a tired child, and said gratefully: "How good and restful that does sound! I'll come. You see," she added, with one hand out to Sid, "I've learned something, too. I've learned to value my loyal friends, and to be humble enough to accept the kindnesses I never can repay."

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